

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Three members of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) will visit Egypt from March 20-24 as part of a regional tour that also includes visits to Saudi Arabia and Israel and the Occupied Territories. During their visit to Egypt, the Commission members will meet with government and religious officials in Cairo to consult with them on issues of religious freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is an independent, bipartisan body that advises the government of the United States on issues related to religious freedom around the world. Its members are not administration officials, but private citizens appointed to advise the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. As part of its mandate to recommend policies to promote religious freedom, the Commission prepares its own annual report, the first of which was issued in May 2000. This report provided extensive recommendations for U.S. policymakers. It also contained a thorough review of the State Department's first Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, including a series of recommendations on how it might be improved. Commission members travel abroad to gather information on religious freedom. They have held public hearings and testified before the U.S. Congress on many occasions. Commission recommendations are communicated publicly or privately to the Administration, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

The members of the Commission visiting Cairo are USCIRF Chairman Elliott Abrams, President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center; Vice Chairman Firuz Kazemzadeh, Senior Advisor for the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States; and Commissioner Laila Al-Marayati, M.D., founder and past president of the Muslim Women's League. Two Commission staffers will accompany the delegation.